

## Vaikava Rapa Nui

Easter Island's Rapa Nui people uphold tradition as guardians of the ocean

Easter Island, a territory of Chile that lies some 4,000 kilometers (2,300 miles) west of that country's coast, is world famous for its Moai statues, which are protected as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Now it is time to protect the treasures off the shores of this remote island, waters of brilliant biodiversity that both feed the local Rapa Nui people and help them continue centuries-old cultural traditions.

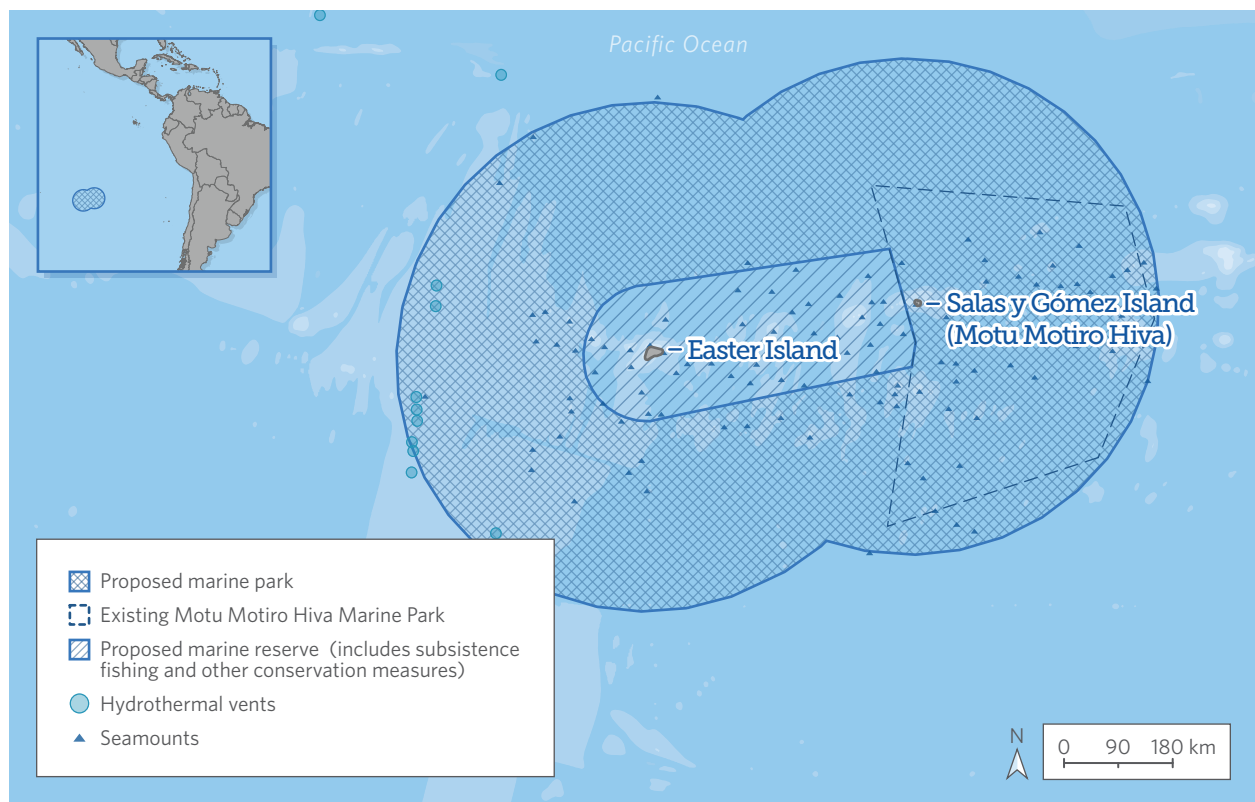
Though still largely unexplored, Easter Island's waters are known to contain geological hot spots and oases teeming with life in an area of the Pacific Ocean that is otherwise extremely poor in nutrients. The seafloor off the island is home to the only hydrothermal vents in Chilean waters. The heat and minerals pluming from the vents help sustain unique wildlife such as the Easter Island butterfly fish, or *tipi tipi* in local dialect, and the Nazca bigeye—two of the more than 140 species found only in Rapa Nui waters. The area also harbors 27 threatened or endangered species, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and is an important spawning ground for many species, including tuna, sharks, marlins, and swordfish.

## Overfishing threatens the island's biodiversity

Increasingly, commercial fishing fleets are pushing into every nook of the world's oceans. Left unchecked, this activity could quickly—and irreversibly—damage Easter Island's special marine environment.

To guard against such an occurrence, the Rapa Nui community is striving to create a large, fully protected marine park around the island. The Pew Charitable Trusts, in collaboration with and supported by the Bertarelli Foundation, is working closely with the islanders on this effort, which would establish the Rapa Nui people as global leaders in ocean conservation and preservation of an indigenous culture.

### Proposed Easter Island Marine Park



## Marine park would carry on a tradition of conservation

Te Mau o te Vaikava o Rapa Nui is a community-led effort to determine the best ways to protect the island's waters. After a year of work, the Rapa Nui have proposed creation of a marine park that would be one of the largest fully protected areas in the world. By designating the park and effectively managing it, Easter Islanders would protect waters that have played a central role in their long-standing cultural traditions, such as their custom of using fishing line and rocks to catch fish. The park would also set a strong conservation example for other island communities around the world.

In addition, such action would help combat illegal fishing in the province's waters: Satellite data gathered and analyzed under a project supported by Pew and the Bertarelli Foundation show that, despite the island's isolation, illicit fishing is probably happening around Easter Island.



Max Bello/The Pew Charitable Trusts



Eduardo Sorensen/The Pew Charitable Trusts



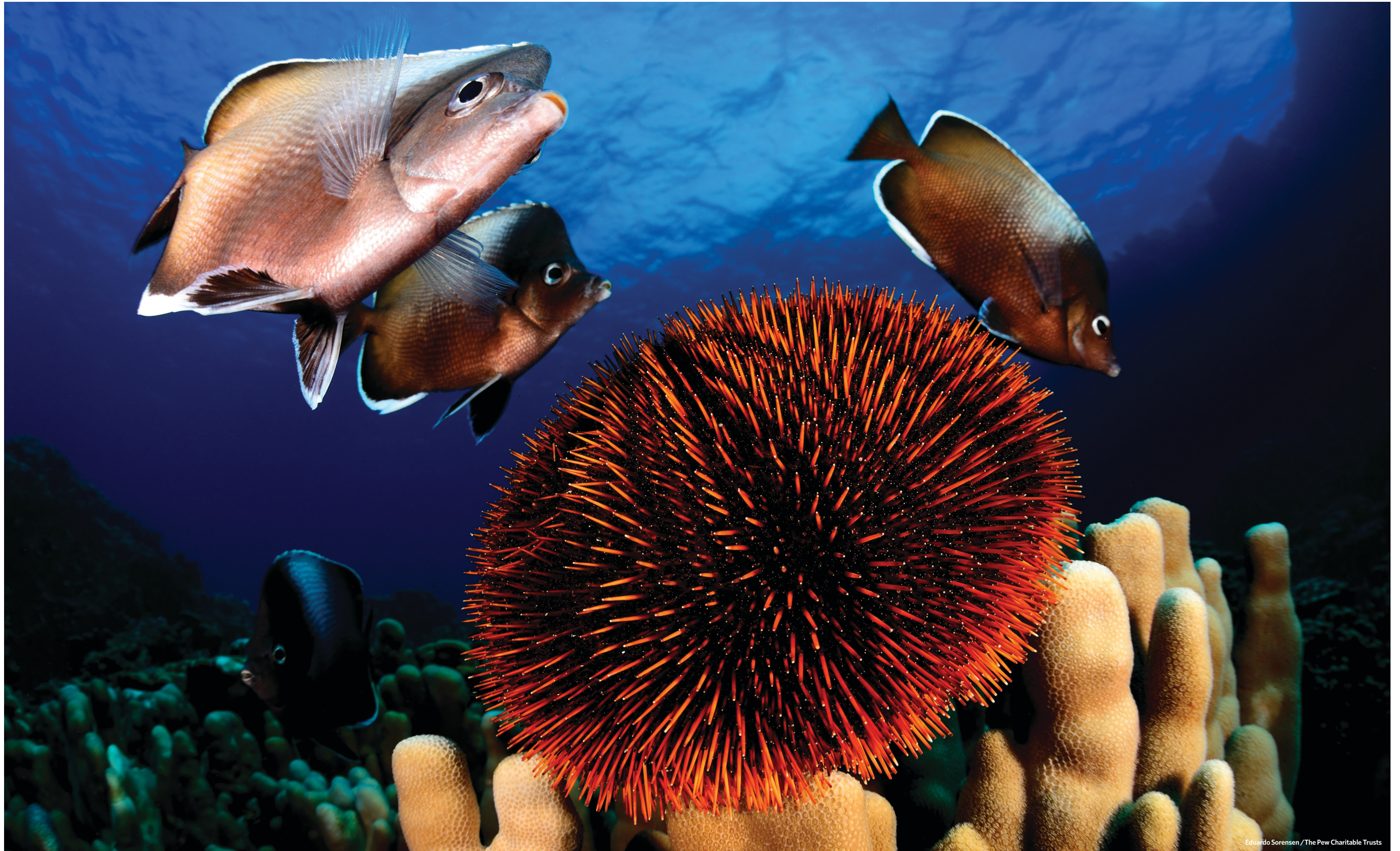
Eduardo Sorensen/The Pew Charitable Trusts

**Top:** Easter Island is celebrated for its hundreds of striking stone statues.

**Above left:** Marine species, including the moray eel, depend on the healthy corals found in Easter Island's waters.

**Above right:** Easter Island's waters are known to contain geological hot spots and oases teeming with life.





Eduardo Sorensen / The Pew Charitable Trusts

Easter Island is home to 142 endemic species including the Easter Island butterfly fish.





Eduardo Sorenson/The Pew Charitable Trusts

Rapa Nui fishing practices are often passed down from generation to generation.

## Seafaring history links the Rapa Nui people to the sea

Ancient Polynesians sailed the Pacific for thousands of years, using only the stars and currents as their guides. Those seafaring skills and deep connection to the ocean in part shaped the modern-day Rapa Nui. Protecting Easter Island's waters would allow the locals to sustain and strengthen their ties to their natural environment and to their ancestors.





**Top:** Easter Island's waters also contain some of the world's healthiest coral reef systems.

**Above:** Easter Island hosts many fish species, including the Chinese trumpetfish.



## About Global Ocean Legacy

The ocean covers nearly three-fourths of the globe and is home to nearly a quarter of the world's known species, with untold numbers of others yet to be discovered. It provides food and livelihoods for billions of people and holds a vast array of wildlife. Yet only about 1 percent of the ocean is fully protected.

Global Ocean Legacy, a project of Pew and its partners, aims to create the first generation of fully protected marine parks around the world, supporting local communities and governments that are seeking to work for the benefit of the environment and future generations.

The project, in collaboration with and supported by the Bertarelli Foundation, has been working since 2012 with the Rapa Nui community, Chilean authorities, and scientists to identify the best management plan for protection of Easter Island's waters.

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**For further information, please visit:**  
[globaloceanlegacy.org](http://globaloceanlegacy.org)

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